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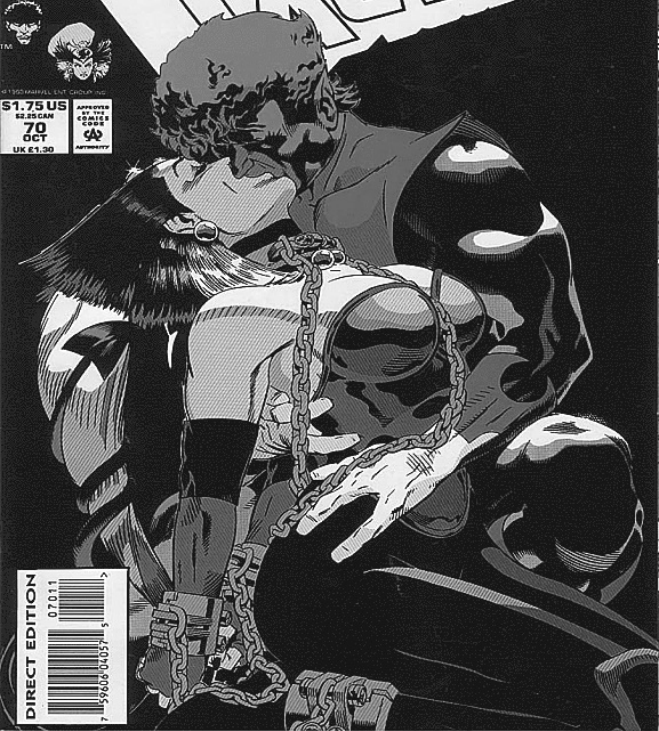
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EXCALIBUR



DIRECT EDITION





HER NAME IS FANG, HIRED
BY KEY MEMBERS OF THE
SHI'AR HIGH COUNCIL WITH
ONE GOAL IN MIND.

KILL THE WORST
TRAITOR IN SHI'AR
HISTORY...AND
ANYONE WHO WOULD
BEFRIEND HER.

HER NAME IS CRYAN. SHE
MADE THE MISTAKE OF
BEFRIENDING A STRANGER...
IT MIGHT JUST COST HER
HER LIFE.



GERISE HAS RECENTLY LOST HER FRIENDS, EXCALIBUR, SEPARATED, SHE BELIEVES, WITH A GALAXY BETWEEN THEM. SHE WILL NEVER SEE HER LOVER, NIGHT-CRAWLER AGAIN. SHE WILL LOSE NO MORE!



WHEN THE SPACE-FARING PIRATES, THE STAR HAMMERS, ARRESTED HER ON EARTH SHE WAS A WILLING PRISONER--TORMENTED BY THE GUILT OF A THOUSAND STOLEN LIVES-- SHE LOST THE WILL TO FIGHT.

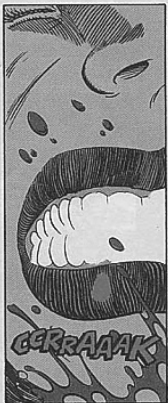
DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU!



I HAVE NO DESIRE FOR YOUR BLOOD!

TRAITOR! I'VE GOT DESIRE ENOUGH FOR TWO...

FIRST YOU, THEN YOUR FRIEND'S BLOOD!





AS THE LIFELESS BODY OF HANG DROPS TO THE GROUND, CERISE FEELS THE HORROR OF EVEN MORE BLOOD ON HER HANDS.

CHOO AND RAZA...

MICROMAX
AND KYLIN...

NIGHTCRAWLER...

CORAIR AND
NEZIBAH...

PHOENIX...

...FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SHE LEFT EARTH, CERISE SENSES THE PRESENCE OF HER TEAMMATES FROM EXCALIBUR, AND THE STARTAMMERS, THE GROUP THAT BROUGHT HER HERE UNDER THE SHI'AR EMPRESS'S DIRECTION.

THEY ARE ALL WILLING TO FIGHT FOR HER RELEASE... TO DIE FOR HER, IF NECESSARY. ESPECIALLY EXCALIBUR'S LEADER, NIGHTCRAWLER, WHO CONVINCED THEM TO FOLLOW CERISE THROUGH THE PORTAL AND ONTO THIS PRISON WORLD.

HE IS IN LOVE WITH CERISE, YET NOW THAT HE HAS SEEN CERISE KILL...

...CAN HE TURN A BLIND EYE TO SUCH A BLOODY DEED?

EARTH, BRADDOCK MANDR.

THE HOME OF EXCALIBUR
IS NOT A HAPPY ONE.

MEGGAN MOURNS THE LOSS OF
HER LOVER, CAPTAIN BRITAIN.

KITTY HAS COME TO
TAKE HER LEAVE.
SHE IS NEEDED ELSE-
WHERE. HER FRIEND
ILLYANA, AS CLOSE
TO HER AS A SISTER,
LIES DYING.

MEMORIES OF HER X-
TEAMMATES, THE X-MEN
FLOOD HER MIND. TWO IN
PARTICULAR, PETER RASPUTIN,
THE NOBLE COLOSSUS—SHE
HAD SUCH A CAUTION ON
HIM—AND HIS LITTLE
SISTER—ILLYANA.

THERE'S NOTHING
I CAN DO HERE—
ILLYANA NEEDS ME...
PETER NEEDS ME...

SHE'S BEEN LIKE THAT FOR DAYS.
NOT MOVING, NOT EATING, NOT
EVEN AWARE THAT THE WORLD
STILL EXISTS.

MEGGAN IS A METAMORPH. SHE HAS
BLENDED INTO THE SCENERY—
BECOME ONE WITH THE WATER.

LOOK...
I'VE GOT TO
GO...

...ILLYANA...

...THE
PROFESSOR
SAID SOMETHING
ABOUT A
VIRUS--

YOU'VE
GOT TO FACE
IT... BRITAIN'S
NOT COMING
BACK.





MEGGAN?

IF MEGGAN
SEES OR HEARS,
SHE GIVES NO
SIGN.



HURRY UP,
FERON. I HAVE
A PLANE TO
CATCH!

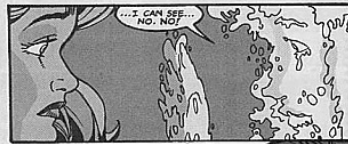
A MOMENT.
DO NOT RUSH THE
MASTERS!



SHE DOESN'T
SEEM TO SENSE
ME... A SPELL
SHOULD DRAW
HER OUT.



HER EYES--
THEY'RE
OPENING...



...I CAN SEE...
NO. NO.



FERON GAZES INTO THE
EMPTYNESS AND DESPAIR
OF A TRAGIC LOSS... IT HAS
TOUCHED HIM DEEP INSIDE
--A LONGING--A LONELINESS
--A VOID. THAT IS EATING AT
HIS VERY BEING--A HUNGER
HE KNOWS HE CAN NEVER
FILL.

HE WILL NEVER BE
THE SAME AGAIN.



TERRIFIC! NOW I'VE
LOST THEM BOTH! I
DON'T KNOW HOW TO
HELP EITHER OF THEM!

I'LL CALL DA! THOMAS.
HE CAN GET THE LOCAL
POLICE STATION TO SEND
SOMEONE OVER. I WISH
I COULD STAY WITH THEM,
BUT I HAVE TO SEE IF I
CAN HELP ILLYANA,
SOMEHOW.

HAVE TO LEAVE
A NOTE FOR KURT.
WHAT CAN I SAY...
FERON IS BLANKER
THAN USUAL? AND
MEGGAN IS THE SAME.
MAYBE I'LL JUST LET
THEM KNOW I'VE
LEFT FOR XAVIER'S
MANSION.



WHILE BACK ON KRAK...

... CERISE IS ECSTATIC TO BE REUNITED, ACROSS A GALAXY, WITH HER ONE TRUE LOVE.

NOW IT WILL END HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



BUT THIS IS NOT A FAIRY TALE.



NIGHTCRAWLER IS NO PRINCE CHARMING.



AND SHE, WITH FRESH BLOOD ON HER HANDS, IS NO SNOW WHITE.



TONIGHT CRAWLER SHE IS MORE LADY MAC BETH.



HOW
DARE YOU
JUDGE ME!



PLEASE--
--SAY
SOMETHING!



SHE WAS
GOING TO KILL
CRYAN... WHAT
SHOULD I
HAVE DONE?



YOU DID
RIGHT.



IF YOU'RE A SOLDIER,
IT'S KILL OR GET KILLED!

IF FANG
WAS STILL
ALIVE, YOU WOULD
BE DEAD, IF NOT NOW,
THEN LATER. LIFE
IS CHEAP...



NOT
TO THE
X-MEN!

I WAS GOING
TO SAY, LIFE IS
CHEAP TO A
HIRED ASSASSIN
LIKE FANG.



I LOST MY WIFE
TO KILLERS LIKE HER.
I'VE BEEN A SOLDIER AND
A PIRATE, THERE'S BEEN A
LOT OF BLOOD ON MY HANDS,
NONE OF IT INNOCENT...
THAT DOESN'T MEAN
I TAKE IT LIGHTLY.



HEADS UP,
STARJAMMERS!

OUR
DEBATE ON THE
FINER POINTS OF
WAR WILL HAVE TO
WAIT, MY FRIEND.

OH,
NIGHT-
CRAWLER,
YOU HAVEN'T
EVEN LOOKED
AT ME.



BANDITS AT 12
O'CLOCK!

AND MOST
OF THE HOURS
IN BETWEEN.



AT LAST A
FIGHT.

CORSAIR WAS
GETTING SOFT,
THOUGHT I.

YOU
MISTAKE
KINDNESS
FOR
WEAKNESS.

AS
ALWAYS.

BEFORE EITHER SIDE
CAN GET DOWN AND
DIRTY, CRYAN ERUPTS
IN A CASCADING WEB
OF ENERGY THAT DIS-
ARMS AND DISABLES
THE GUARDS.

I THINK
I SHOULD HAVE
STAYED AT
HOME.

I SMELL
A ROYAL
PLOT.

HER FACE.
IT'S CHANGING TO
LILANDRA'S.

HER
VOICE
EVEN SOUNDS
LIKE
LILANDRA.

THIS INTERFERENCE
WITH THE WILL OF THE
SHIAR IS UNACCEPTABLE.
I HAVE MY OWN WAYS
OF ASCERTAINING
THE TRUTH.

CRYAN IS FROM
THE ANCIENT RACE CALLED
THE ORACLES. THROUGH HER
RACE I AM ABLE TO
TRANSCEND THE BOUNDARIES
OF TIME AND SPACE. TO
TRANSPOSE MY MIND WITH
ANY ONE OF THEM,
WHEREVER THEY MAY
BE IN MY EMPIRE.

THIS IS
AN INTERNAL
SHIAR AFFAIR.
KINDLY
LEAVE.

WE ARE
NOT LEAVING
WITHOUT
CERISE.

I'VE SEEN
SHIAR JUSTICE
BEFORE.





THROUGH CRYAN,
CERISE'S MIND OPENS
TO LILANDRA...

...AND ALL
PRESENT BECOME
SILENT WITNESSES
TO THE EVENTS
ON THAT FATAL
TRIP.

NIGHTCRAWLER AND THE REST OF
EXCALIBUR, STILL HELPLESS IN CRYAN'S
PSIONIC WEB, CAN ONLY MARVEL AT THE
REALISM OF THE RECONSTRUCTION, AND
FEAR THE FATAL OUTCOME OF THIS
DEADLY SCENARIO.

THEY ARE ON BOARD THE SHI'AR
ENCRUPTMENT SHIP. THE
DERANGED CRYAN IS IN COMMAND.
MADNESS IS IN HIS EYES. GENO-
CIDIC IN HIS BRAIN. CERISE SITS
LIKE A STONE AT THE NAVIGATOR'S
CONSOLE.

THE SHIP'S MISSION IS TO
CONVERT THE OUTER REGIONS
OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE.

FOR CRYAN, AGAINST ALL
REASON, AGAINST ALL
SHI'AR PRECEDENT,
CONVERSION IS JUST
ANOTHER NAME FOR
GENOCIDE.

CERISE HAS CONTINUALLY FOUGHT
THE ORDERS. NOW THERE IS
NOTHING MORE SHE CAN DO TO STOP
THE SENSELESS SLAUGHTER OF
HALF THE PLANET'S PORPOISE-LIKE
BEINGS.



IN HER MIND'S
EYE, SHE SEES
AND FEELS
THE PAIN...

...A BILLION CREATURES
EVAPORATE, THEIR
ALIEN ASPIRATIONS
AND FEARS VANISHING
IN A WHITE HEAT.

CERSE FEELS THE
GUILT FOR THE
ENTIRE CREW.

IS SHE THE ONLY
SNAKE THERE WITH
A CONSCIENCE?

SHE KNOWS
WHAT SHE
MUST DO.

SHE CAN FEEL CERSE'S
MAD GRIN FOLLOWING
HER EVERY MOVE,
DAVING HER TO
CHALLENGE HIS
COMMAND.

SHE WOULD SOON
BE WIPING IT OFF
HIS FACE FOREVER.



"I HAD FAILED THE HELPLESS
KNSASHITIANS--I WOULD NOT
FAIL THE NEXT PLANET LISTED
FOR 'CONVERSION'."

"AS THE SHIP BEGAN TO PULL
AWAY FROM THE BLIGHTED
PLANET, I ENTERED THE
ESCAPE POD AND DONNED
THE DEEP-SPACE SUIT."

"I HAD TIMED MY DEPARTURE
TO THE LAST SECOND. NO ONE
WOULD NOTICE MY LEAVING--
THEY HAD OTHER THINGS TO
BE CONCERNED WITH..."

"I HAD SET THE CONTROLS
FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN."

"THE MOMENT THE SHIP
ACTIVATED ITS WARP
DRIVE, THE DIRECTIONAL
COMPUTERS WOULD PLOT
A COURSE INTO FIERY
OBLIVION."

"I WONDERED
WOULD THEY
FIND SALVATION?
I KNEW THERE
WAS NONE FOR
ME."



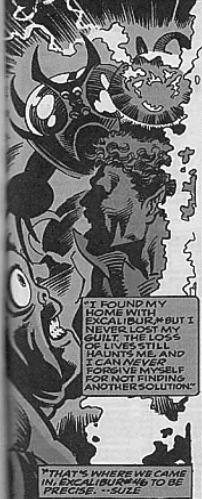
"I HEADED FOR THE NEAREST SHI'AR OUTPOST, DETERMINED TO CONTACT LILANDRA AND TELL HER OF THE ATROCITIES BEING COMMITTED UNDER THE SHI'AR NAME. I PRAYED SHE KNEW NOTHING OF THE ACTIONS OF HER SUBORDINATES.

"MY SHIP WAS THROWN OFF COURSE BY A SOLAR FLARE CAUSED BY THE EXPLOSION OF THE ENCRUIMENT VESSEL.

"I PASSED THROUGH A STARGATE AND FOUND MYSELF WITHIN EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM, CLOSE ENOUGH TO TELEPORT.

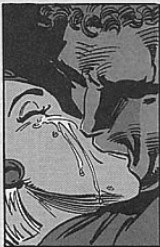


"I KNEW THERE HAD TO BE MORE TO THIS ACCUSATION. CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME FOR DOUBTING YOU, EVEN FOR A MOMENT?"



"I FOUND MY HOME WITH EXCALIBUR, BUT I NEVER LOST MY GUILT. THE LOSS OF LIVES STILL HAUNTS ME, AND I CAN NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF FOR NOT FINDING ANOTHER SOLUTION."

"THAT'S WHERE WE CAME IN, EXCALIBUR #46 TO BE PRECISE. --SUZE





YOU
WILL
HAVE TO
POSTPONE
YOUR
REUNION.

VAS IS
DAS?



C'EFN DOCTORED
THE SHIP'S LOSS. THE
KNASHIAN CONVERSION
IS SEEN AS A MILITARY
TRUMP IN THE FACE
OF OVERWHELMING
ODDS.

THEY ALSO SHOW
CERISE ABANDONING THE SHIP
AFTER SHE HAD SET IT ON ITS DEATH
COURSE. THE LOG ALONE WAS ENOUGH
TO CONVICT HER OF MASS MURDER,
MUTINY AND A LITANY OF
OTHER CRIMES.

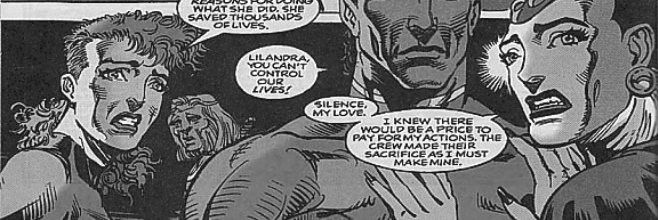
CERISE IS
INFAMOUS.

BUT SHE HAD
REASONS FOR DOING
WHAT SHE DID. SHE
SAVED THOUSANDS
OF LIVES.

LILANDRA,
YOU CAN'T
CONTROL
OUR
LIVES!

SILENCE,
MY LOVE.

I KNEW THERE
WOULD BE A PRICE TO
PAY FOR MY ACTIONS. THE
CREW MADE THEIR
SACRIFICE AS I MUST
MAKE MINE.





YOU MAY
HAVE ACTED IN
GOOD FAITH,
BUT THERE ARE
STRUCTURES
AND FORMAL-
ITIES THAT
HAVE TO BE
FOLLOWED.



C'ERN WAS
YOUR COMMANDER.
HOWEVER WRONG YOU
FELT HIS ACTIONS TO BE,
THEY DID NOT GIVE YOU THE
RIGHT TO ACT AS JUDGE,
JURY AND EXECUTIONER.
WERE ALL ON THAT
CRAFT EQUALLY
GUILTY?

THERE ARE
REMEDIES, COURTS
AND JUSTICE.

I AM
COMMANDING
YOU TO SERVE OUT
THE REST OF YOUR
LIFE SENTENCE...



...AT MY
SIDE.



JUST GIVE THE
WORD, NIGHTCRAWLER.

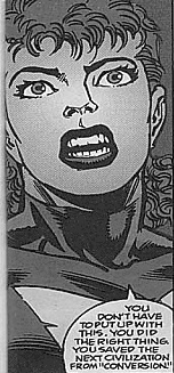
I KNOW
WHAT IT IS
LIKE TO LOSE A
LOVED ONE.
MY SWORDS
ARE YOURS.



YOUR REHA-
BILITATION WILL
COME THROUGH
YOUR ACTIONS.
BY ROUTING OUT
THOSE FACTIONS
AMONG THE SH'AR,
LIKE C'ERN, WHO
USE THEIR
AUTHORITY TO
COMMIT
ATROCITIES.



I UNDERSTAND.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THIS. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING. YOU SAVED THE NEXT CIVILIZATION FROM "CONVERSION!"



I'M DOING MY DUTY, AS CERISE DID HERS.



WHATEVER I DID, IT WAS TO SERVE THE EMPIRE.

IT WOULD BE AN HONOR TO ESCORT YOU TO THE THRONE-WORLD.

AS A SOLDIER, I KNOW YOU CAN'T WIN.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HAS EVERYONE GONE MAD?

PLEASE DON'T SPEAK--JUST LISTEN--I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD FIND LOVE SUCH AS YOURS. YOU WERE MY SALVATION.

AND YOU ARE MY HOPE.



THEIR LIPS TOUCH--WHAT
DID CERISE ALWAYS CALL
IT--A LIP MASSAGE?

FOR A MOMENT,
IT IS AS IF NO ONE
ELSE EVER EXISTED...



HER LIPS FADE IN RESIGNATION
TO HER FATE...



...AND NIGHTCRAWLER
IS LEFT ALONE WITH HIS
MEMORIES...

...AND THE FAINTEST
IMPRESSION OF A
KISS.



Next ISSUE:

The dramatic conclusion to the FATAL ATTRACTIONS storyline, featuring a double-sized issue with a hologram cover.

GUEST-STARRING PROFESSOR XAVIER, JEAN GREY, CYCLOPS and CABLE, and welcoming our new creative team KEN LASHLEY and CAM SMITH!



KRAG, THE ROCK
WITHIN A WORLD.

THE SHI'AR EMPIRE'S PAN-DIMENSIONAL
PRISON LOCATED BENEATH THE PLANET'S
SURFACE--WHOSE TEMPERAMENT SEEMS
WELL SUITED TO ITS FUNCTION.

CERISE, FORMALLY A NAVIGATOR
WITH THE SHI'AR RECRUITMENT
VESSEL OF THE GRAND JHAR AND
UNTIL RECENTLY A MEMBER OF
THE MUTANT EARTH GROUP
EXCALIBUR, IS IMPRISONED
HERE...



...ACCUSED OF THE MOST HEINOUS OF CRIMES, THE MASS MURDER OF HER FELLOW CREW MEMBERS.

ON THIS WORLD CERISE HAS MET MANY WHO WOULD LOVE TO KILL HER, AND ONLY ONE, CRYAN, WHO SHE COULD CALL FRIEND.

A FRIEND SHE IS NOW DEFENDING TO THE DEATH!

This story takes place before UNCANNY X-MEN #302.

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KEN LASHLEY - ART
DON HUDSON - PARKER
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